



USAID/Armenia

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The new USAID-funded community playground in Gyumri, Armenia

One Year Anniversary Ceremony for Pilot Housing Certificate Program

April 28, 2001 marked the one-year anniversary of the USAID-Government of Armenia co-financed Pilot Housing Certificate Program. The Mayor of Gyumri, Vartan Ghukasian, and the Governor of Shirak Region, Felix Pirumian, invited US Ambassador to Armenia, Michael C. Lemmon, and USAID/Armenia Mission Director, Keith E. Simmons, to Gyumri to celebrate the occasion. As part of the celebration, the delegation visited the site of the recently opened community playground. The playground was funded by USAID and installed on a site that was cleared of temporary shelters by the City of Gyumri. Save the Children also organized a public works program on this site, under its program with USAID, to clear away debris, improve the road and walkways, and prepare the area for installation of the playground. The Armenian Assembly of America also planted trees on the site.

Since the beginning of the pilot housing certificate program, 312 certificates have been issued to eligible households. Of these 249 have already located permanent housing, and 193 temporary shelters have been removed. To date, 89% of buyers have found housing in Gyumri.

Armenia Participates in Tourism Fair

The Armenian Tourism Development Agency (ATDA), with support from the USAID-funded International Executive Service Corps (IESC), recently presented Armenia to the world tourism market with their participation in the annual International Tourism Exchange in Berlin held March 3-7, 2001. The International Tourism Exchange in Berlin is known throughout the world as the leading trade fair for the global tourism industry.

IESC worked with ATDA to prepare an exhibit presenting Armenia's cultural and historical attractions to potential tourists from around the world. The exhibit gave Armenia a platform in the world's largest professional travel industry trade show and positioned Armenia on today's travel map as a tourist destination offering an exciting, relatively under-traveled and historical destination. The exhibit's ethnic appearance included traditional Armenian rugs, musical instruments and costumes. In addition, Armenian wine, dried fruit (compliments of the US Department of Agriculture), hard and chocolate candy (compliments of Grand Candy), and Armenian brandy (compliments of Yerevan Brandy Factory) were displayed and available for sampling.



The Armenia booth at the Berlin Tourism Exchange

The purpose of this newsletter, which will be published every other month, is to inform readers about recent events related to the USAID assistance program in Armenia. The Mission's program focuses on private sector growth, energy sector restructuring, democracy and governance, social sector development, water resources management and revitalization of the earthquake zone.

Human Rights Conference Held in Armenia

On May 3-4, a USAID-funded conference entitled “*Human Rights in Armenia, Problems and Perspectives*,” was organized by World Learning’s NGO Strengthening Program, in cooperation with the Civil Society Development Union and the Association of Investigative Journalists. This conference offered a forum for over 70 participants – representatives of Armenian governmental and non-governmental organizations, broadcast and print media and international organizations – to present their views on the protection of human rights and fundamental freedoms in Armenia.

The conference covered a wide range of human rights issues, including the rights of handicapped children, the rights of prisoners, and the reform of the judicial system. In addition to the discussion of these issues, two documentary video films – *Children’s Rights in Armenia* and *The Judicial System in Armenia* – were presented to participants. The conference also coincided with the International Day of the Media, celebrated on May 3.

The issues discussed at the conference are of particular importance in light of the Republic of Armenia’s recent accession to the Council of Europe. Members of the Council of Europe are required to bring domestic legislation in line with international standards, especially with regard to human rights and the rule of law.

In a series of follow-up meetings, NGO representatives will plan how to bring the issues discussed at the conference to the public. Paper and electronic versions of the speeches presented by key participants, as well as the summary of the minutes, are available from World Learning.

National Family Medicine Training Center (NFMTTC) Designated

On April 27, 2001, the Minister of Health, Ararat Mkrtchian, and the Mayor of Yerevan, Robert Nazaryan, announced that Yerevan Polyclinic # 17 has been designated as the National Family Medicine Training Center (NFMTTC). The Polyclinic will continue to serve the general population, but it will also provide special clinical training for physicians and nurses who will become family medicine practitioners.

The NFMTTC will provide training for residents and students at the State Medical University, the National Institute of Health, and the Basic Medical College. It will also prepare the faculty who will staff a series of regional Family Medicine Training Centers that will be established to support the nationwide adoption of Family Medicine

continued on page 3

EQZ Recovery Program Agreement Signed



USAID Mission Director Keith E. Simmons announces the new EQZ Recovery Program

On Monday, May 7, 2001, USAID signed a Memorandum of Understanding with the Government of Armenia and the participating regions and cities to launch the new two-year Earthquake Zone Recovery (EQZ) Program.

Building on the success of the USAID Pilot Housing Certificate Project in Gyumri, this new program will provide permanent housing to at least 4,000 families in the Shirak and Lori regions who lost their homes in the 1988 earthquake, and allow local administrations to proceed with redevelopment plans. The program will be implemented through an approximately \$20 million two-year USAID contract, with an organization currently being selected. The Armenian Government has agreed to provide AMD 30 million in co-financing for the program.

The EQZ Program will focus on planning for redevelopment in the Lori and Shirak regions and re-housing approximately 4,000 families through a combination of housing certificates and housing improvement grants. Under the program, qualifying families are those who lost permanent housing in the earthquake, have not received compensation and continue to live in temporary or inadequate housing.



Temporary shelter being removed from the project site

In selected areas of Lori and Shirak, eligible families will receive housing certificates with a value based on their housing size requirements and average housing market prices. Certificates can be used to purchase permanent available housing anywhere in the country. Approximately 2,400 families in Gyumri and 600 families in the Lori region will receive housing certificates.

Also under this program, an estimated 650 rural and 350 urban families in Lori and Shirak will receive housing improvement grants. Grants will also be given to approximately 80 condominium/homeowners associations for building improvements.

NFMTC Designated, cont.

practices throughout Armenia. The NFMTC will also ensure that all Family Medicine clinical training meets quality standards required established by the Ministry of Health.

The NFMTC is a collaborative project. The World Bank is providing a credit to Armenia under the Armenian Health Reform Project to pay for the necessary renovation and remodeling and equipment of the polyclinic, and USAID will provide technical support through PADCO for training in Family Medicine techniques. Despite its new status, the NFMTC will remain a fully functioning polyclinic, providing an expanded range of services of improved quality to its current population of patients. It is anticipated that renovation will commence in August or September 2001, and that training activities will begin in early 2002.

"This new Center in Yerevan," Minister Mkrtchian stated at the announcement, "will improve health care for all the people of Armenia. The new type of physicians and nurses will bring good medical services to all our regions and villages."

USAID/IFES Sponsor Women's Day Events

During March and April, the USAID-funded International Foundation for Election Systems (IFES) and its Armenian counterpart, the Women's Republican Council (WRC), sponsored a number of activities to celebrate International Women's Day. These events, which took place throughout Armenia, were designed to raise awareness about the important leadership and political participation roles that women play in communities throughout Armenia.

On April 26, IFES and the WRC concluded the women's day events at a ceremony honoring the winners of a contest for the best essay on the subject of "Women and Armenian Statehood." Organized through the Ministry of Education, this contest gave teenaged girls in all regions of the country the opportunity to present an essay on this topic. The following is an excerpt from one of the essays:

"The Armenian woman has been a political activist in past centuries, such as the historical figure Tigranuhi. However, during the last 2 centuries, the Armenian woman has been forgotten as a political activist. There are numerous poems and novels depicting women as a symbol of beauty in different roles such as mother to a child, or a proud mother sending her son to the battlefield. As a political activist, however, no one has depicted the Armenian woman in that role." *Anna Sahakian, Ashtarak*

Noah's Ark Program a Success



USAID Mission Director Keith E. Simmons (2nd from right) visited a local farm in Gavar, Armenia

During a recent visit to Gavar, Armenia, USAID/Armenia Mission Director Keith E. Simmons participated in a ceremony for the Noah's Ark Program, which is a part of the USAID-funded 3-year Social Transition Program (STP). The United Methodist Committee on Relief (UMCOR) is implementing the Noah's Ark Program under a cooperative agreement with USAID/Armenia.

Under the program, UMCOR provides vulnerable families with pregnant livestock or other agricultural inputs. The recipient families commit themselves to "pass on the gift" by donating the first female offspring or seed from the first harvest to another family in the community. The second



The piglets will be given to other vulnerable families in the community

family likewise commits to passing on the gift to a third family, and so on. In this way, the total number of beneficiaries continues to grow with each passing cycle.

The Noah's Ark program will work with local non governmental organizations (NGOs) or community-based organizations (CBOs) that will take responsibility for identifying the most vulnerable members of the community. The program is targeting 1,260 families in 14 communities. As of March 2001, agricultural inputs have been delivered to a total of 300 families in the targeted regions of Armenia.

For more information about the USAID assistance program in Armenia, please see the USAID/Armenia Mission Web site at: www.usaid.gov/am

Mammography Center Reopens

On March 7, 2001, the American-Armenian Mammography University Center held a grand re-opening after several months of renovations. As a result of the renovations, the Center now has a modern laboratory and a new gynecological unit with advanced equipment. The USAID-funded American International Health Alliance (AIHA) has provided technical training for the Center's staff, and supported the renovations.

Since the Mammography Center was founded in 1997, more than 20,000 women have undergone examinations at the Center, 800 of them were diagnosed to have breast cancer, and 600 of them have already received appropriate treatment.

USAID--Government of Armenia Sign Agreement on Census

On March 21st, the Government of Armenia took a major step toward preparations for the census of the population in October 2001. The Minister of Finance and Economy, Vardan Khachatryan, the National Statistical Service President, Stepan Mnatsakanyan, and the USAID/Armenia Mission Director Keith E. Simmons, signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) to provide expert technical assistance, training and computer equipment needed to effectively manage the program. The signing of this MOU follows the signing of a broader agreement in mid-March between the Government of Armenia, the World Bank, the British Department for International Development, UN agencies and USAID relating to overall support for the 2001 census.

Under USAID funding, the United States Bureau of the Census will work closely with the National Statistical Service of Armenia to refine the methodologies for gathering, analyzing and managing census information.

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The United States Agency for International Development

USAID/Armenia Welcomes New Staff

Jim Du Vall

Before coming to Armenia, Jim served with USAID in Liberia, Burundi, Mali in the Africa Bureau and in Hungary before retiring in 1997. Since his retirement, he has continued to work with USAID on temporary assignments in Armenia and Rwanda.

Eugene Sienkiewicz

Prior to joining USAID/Armenia, Gene worked throughout the former Soviet Union, primarily with the Red Cross. He has worked previously in Armenia (1994-95) on USAID-funded housing reform activities with ICMA. In addition, he has been involved in housing management, running a Japanese restaurant, and a program evaluation for a USDA-sponsored food stamps program. Gene was also a Peace Corps Volunteer in the Philippines. Gene was born and raised in New Jersey, went to school at Dickinson College in Pennsylvania and the University of Colorado-Boulder.

Magdalena Maxwell

Magdalena Maxwell arrives in Yerevan with a broad range of experience working with USAID in Latin America and Africa. She has a Bachelor Degree in Management and Social Work, and a Masters in Public Administration. She has lived in Tegucigalpa, Honduras; Khartum, Sudan; Cairo, Egypt; and Gabarone, Botswana where she worked for USAID public relations, personnel management, and general services. She also has private sector work experience with Booze-Allen & Hamilton and Chemonics International in Cairo, Bucharest and Washington, D.C.

Yeva Hyusyan

Yeva Hyusyan joined the mission as a Development Program Specialist, with responsibilities focusing on GOA and donor liaison. Yeva graduated from the Yerevan State University, Department of International Economic Relations. She also has a Master's Degree in Business Administration (MBA) from the Maastricht School of Management, the Netherlands. Most recently she worked at the FFPMC (Foreign Financing Projects Management Center) of the Ministry of Finance and Economy of Armenia on the World Bank's and Lincy Foundation's projects aimed at institutional and private sector development in Armenia.